

# Official Language Research in the Next Decade: English Education in Quebec

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Existing research consulted consists primarily of reports from:

- Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA)
- Quebec Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE)
- MELS statistics
- MELS reports, Services à la communauté anglophone
- Quebec Community Groups Network documents
- Analysis of census data (Floch, Jedwab)



## Background on English Education in Quebec: Some Key Points

- Schools are the only constitutionally protected institution under community management in the province
- In some cases the only local public institution devoted to providing services to the English-speaking community
- Schools increasingly perceived as key sites in ensuring community vitality (QESBA, 2002)

# Governance of English Education

- Schools and school boards are under management of community
- Governance strengthened by creation of linguistic school boards in 1998
- Schools and school boards are administered under a common educational program and Quebec's Education Act
- At the Ministry level, English schooling represented by an Assistant Deputy Minister who consults an Advisory Board on English Education. *Services à la communauté anglophone* oversees English education sector and manages funding provided through the Canada-Quebec Agreement for Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction



## Present situation and challenges in Quebec's English school system

- Demographic decline
- Outmigration of anglophones
- Students' need for bilingualism and biliteracy
- Increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in student population
- Urban challenges
- Regional challenges

## Demographic decline

- School population more than halved since the 70s (from 250,000 in 1971 to 107,750 at present time in public schools)
- School population has stabilized but could continue to drop – a major concern



## Factors underlying decline of English schools

- Low birth rate in English speaking population
- Restricted access to English sector (Charte de la langue française). New immigrants and Francophone majority do not have access to English schools.
- Cross-over phenomenon of *ayants droit* students to French schools. Roughly 10,000 English mother tongue students are in French schools by choice, another 10,000 are there because of legal restrictions (Béland, 2006)
- Continued outmigration of Anglophone families and educated bilingual young adults (Floch, 2005, 2006, 2008). Retention rate for anglophones is at 50% (Floch, 2006)

## Impact of declining population

- School closures
- Limited funding/resources to meet educational needs
- Increased pressure to provide bilingualism and biliteracy within English schools to counter crossover phenomenon to French schools and meet linguistic needs of youth



- « In many English schools today (...) French is now considered a core subject on a plane with English Arts and Mathematics. » (ABEE, 1995:8)
- « Of all the factors that differentiate English and French Education in Quebec, the imperative for biliteracy for Anglophone high school graduates is the most important. Anglophone parents expect proficiency in both languages and they will demand it more and more » (ABEE, 1995:6)

# Anglophone crossover to French schools and the quest for bilingualism and biliteracy

- French immersion no longer considered sufficient by Anglophone parents to meet language needs in Quebec's workworld (Laperrière and Lamarre, in preparation)
- Roughly 10,000 Anglophone ayants-droit students currently in French schools by choice – mostly at the primary level (McAndrew and Eid, 2003)
- Most of these students will choose English sector at high school level. Question currently raised: These students leave French sector with the language skills of grade six students. Is this enough for workworld?



# Francophone crossover to English schools

- Currently, a large number of French mother tongue students in English schools (right to English school is acquired through a parent who attended an English language school).
- Over the 1990s, enrollment of Francophone mother tongue students increased by about 35% in English schools in Montreal, while in the regions it increased by about 115%. As a percentage within English schools, their presence rose from 15.2% to 27.9% between 1991 and 2003 (Jedwab, 2004).
- These students have a different set of language needs/complexifying the provision of bilingualism and biliteracy in English sector.
- Their presence challenges traditional role of minority schooling - the reproduction of a linguistic community. (Jedwab, 2004). It also, however, has helped counter decline.

# A very diverse multilingual and multicultural community

- A multicultural AngloQuebec/history of immigration to Quebec (Norris,1999; Floch, 2005)
- An important trait of the Anglophone community today is its high degree of ethnic and religious diversity, with over 30% born outside of Canada and almost 21% declaring that they belong to a visible minority (Floch, 2006).



## English schooling in Quebec takes place in very diverse sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, geographic settings

- English schools are found in a wide range of realities from urban poor, to suburban middle class on the island of Montreal to remote isolated schools in the Lower North Shore.
- A number of schools with less than 200 students or even 100 students (QESBA, 2002).

## In summary: challenges

- Schools in urban core of Montreal dealing with poverty and questions of social equity, racism. The number of schools considered disadvantaged remains low, but has doubled in recent years.
- Small schools face the difficulty of providing quality education services/vocational training.
- Very complex language needs among the student population. Expectations that schools will provide students with bilingualism/biliteracy.
- « No one size, one curriculum, one model will fit all... Issues have to be resolved in different ways for different schools » QAC for QESBA, 2006.



## Rethinking English schools – an initiative already underway

- Community Learning Centers – a new and potentially viable solution launched in 2006
- CLCs are to serve as « hubs » for education and community development in their respective communities

## Mandate of CLCs

- Contribute to conditions necessary for student success
- Respond to the particular culture and needs of the community they serve
- Provide services that are accessible to the broader community
- Deliver a range of services that are self-supporting over time
- Integrate existing services and resources
- Develop financial/resource partnerships
- Demonstrate flexible and innovative approaches to service delivery



- 22 CLCs currently being piloted (three year mandate) in different types of settings across Quebec (there are over 300 English schools in Quebec)
- With funding from Canada-Quebec Agreement for Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction
- For more information on CLCs, consult <http://www.learnquebec.ca>

Where to from here?  
A shift in strategies?

- “The path to a vibrant and strengthened English public school system, and thus, to greater English-speaking community vitality, will best be set through the active pursuit of new and mutually productive partnerships with the francophone majority community.” (QAC to QESBA, 2006, p.8)



## Looking for a comfort zone in Quebec

- *“those of us who stayed... those of us who didn't take the 401.”*
- *« This in HOME, this isn't like (...) not passing through, this is it. »*
- How to feel an integral part of Quebec society? How to feel a sense of belonging and commitment to Quebec? (QCGN, 2006)
- In the past, parents hoped that French skills would make this possible. But is language learning enough? (Laperrière and Lamarre, in preparation)
- Proposal for outreach to Francophone sector (QAC, 2006)

## A challenge of a different sort

- “The myth of AngloQuebec as Wasp - a fake” minority.
- Outreach and new initiatives partnering English and French schools— in everyone’s best interests, but a partnership that requires willingness from both school sectors.
- Marketing our best asset: what do we have to offer French sector – opportunities to learn English (QAC to QESBA, 2006)



# Research needs in the next decade:

## OUTMIGRATION

- The language needs of Anglophones to remain in job market in Quebec.
- The language levels of high school graduates from English sector
- Systemic obstacles to obtaining employment in Quebec
- Young Anglophones who stay and make a place for themselves in the province, as well as on those who leave
- Cost of outmigration to Quebec in terms of lost human capital

## Research needs in the next decade: ADJUSTMENT TO CHANGE

- How to improve ability to provide students with bilingualism and biliteracy within English sector. New solutions that take into account the diversity of language backgrounds of students.
- *« preparing young people for a changing, bilingual future here in Quebec and beyond... »  
QAC, October 2006*



Research on how English schools are currently exploring their ability to share resources in different ways and find new solutions to challenges/new initiatives

- By working with other schools in the English sector (eg. Lower North Shore, distance education and use of Visio-conferencing network)
- By pulling in new partners (health and social services, community organizations, entrepreneurs, cultural associations, etc)
- By opening up who schools serve (the whole community/lifelong learning)
- By working with other schools in the French sector. (Sutton School, Magdalen Islands, Chateauguay)
- By doing many of the above within Community Learning Centers



# Where to from here? Research priorities in the next decade

- Demographic decline of school system
- Outmigration of anglophones
- Students' need for bilingualism and biliteracy
- Increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in student population
- Urban challenges/poverty/race and equity issues
- Regional challenges/small schools/provision of services
- The school as a major institution in community vitality